

Language Differentiation of Ukraine's Population

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Abstract

While people of many nationalities live in Ukraine, Ukrainians and Russians constitute the majority of its population. Territorially, the Ukrainian language is spread unevenly, which results in pronounced bilingualism and language bipolarity. The influence of the Soviet policy of the Russian language dominance is still present in Ukraine. Ukrainian prevails in the sphere of public administration and education. Russian dominates in most mass media. Under such circumstances it is important to maintain conditions for the preservation of the language identity of other ethnic minorities, which would promote the development of linguistic diversity in Ukraine.

Keywords

Ukraine; bilingualism and language bipolarity; language identity; linguistic diversity; territorial distribution of languages

Introduction

The ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine connected with emergence of the so-called People's republics (Lugansk People's Republic & Donetsk People's Republic) as well as the annexation of Crimea breed a number of questions related to the impact of various factors, both of an international (see Haukkala 2015, Jonsson & Seely 2015, Marten 2015, Robinson 2016, Roth 2007) and intra-Ukrainian nature (see Flynn 1996, Kuzio 2003, Peterson & Kuck 2014, Sotiriou 2016, Swain & Mykhnenko 2007), on the appearance of these conflicts and their changes (see Cavandoli 2016, Korhonen 2015, Ramos & Kovalenko 2016, Serhiy 2016, Socor 2014).

Cultural diversity in Ukraine, especially national identity, is the most important element of intra-Ukrainian variation, affecting the initiation fights in the east of the country and the annexation of Crimea (Korostelina 2013, Kuzio 1996,

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Shulman 1999, 2004, 2006, Stebelsky 2009, van Zon, 2001). Naturally, there are also other elements, such as religious diversity (Kozelsky 2014, Shabliy 2000), or the linguistic one, whose analysis is the main objective of this study.

The above diversity overlaps with many others, among which political diversity is particularly important. Thus W. Ischenko (2016) stresses the influence of right-wing political forces on the political transformation in Ukraine. These forces have always been stronger in the west of the country (Kuzio 2010). In turn, A. Haydukiewicz (2011) draws attention to the diversity of pro-Western and pro-Russian preferences during elections.

The issue of the importance of language in today's world can be viewed from many perspectives. According to one of them, a microscale and a macroscale depiction is possible. In the first of them we focus on the importance of language for an individual. A man can own several types of identity (national, cultural, religious, civil, etc.). In particular, national identity is based on common origin, religion, language, culture, historical fate, etc. Fundamental research on national identity was conducted by A.D. Smith. He described components of the "Western" and the "ethnic" models of the nation: "The place of law in the Western civic model is taken by vernacular culture, usually languages and customs in the ethnic model" (Smith 1991, 12).

In the macroscale depiction we focus on the importance of language for the identification of large groups of the population. The state policy affecting the creation of language identity is very important in this approach. It has its peculiarities in totalitarian regimes; in particular, it has to promote strengthening of political systems (see Váňa 2012). Post-communist states have different experience in language policy implementation. M. Riegl and T. Vaško (2007) described two types of language policy: inclusive (not trying to marginalize the languages of ethnic minorities, either legislatively or practically) and exclusive (being its opposite by obvious promoting of the language of the majority/authorities), with several derivative subtypes. The authors are convinced that this often controversial classification can spark further academic discussion about the actual language policies in post-Soviet countries. In the Slovak Republic a catalogue of language rights of minorities was created which became part of the binding law (Škrobák 2009). The Georgian experience of the state language implementation in the educational sphere shows that aspirations of language minorities to preserve their authenticity must be taken into account (Kopečková 2012). Unlike in other post-communist countries, in Belarus the majority of the population do not consider the language issue as too pressing, although Russian clearly dominates there (Volakhava 2010).

In addition, we must also bear in mind that implementation of the rules of a liberal state fosters freedom also in the realm of language. However, in the case of Ukraine (as well as neighbouring Russia) there has been a decline in the popularity of these ideas. This is a consequence of two processes: an increase in social demand for a “caring” state (the preservation of a strong social state) and redirecting the authorities’ concern to build identity by promoting national values (the latter trend embraces the national cultural and historic traditions as the basis for social integration and a new collective identity) (Kiryukhin 2016). In the case of Ukraine, the existence of “post-Soviet identity” strongly related to the Russian language is an additional complicating factor (Hołowko 2013). It occurs especially frequently in the east of the country.

In Ukraine a deformation of the linguistic and cultural space took place, manifesting itself in the spread of two languages used both in mass media and in social interaction (see Bester-Dilger 2009, Kulyk 2006, Ryabinska 2017). Hence the second objective of the study is an analysis of the language structure in selected mass-media.

Naturally, language problems in Ukraine do not apply only to the bipolar system the Ukrainian language – the Russian language. To show the situation of languages spoken by small minorities, the case study of the Kirimli language is discussed.

What the figures show

Data of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the results of the all-Ukrainian population censuses of 1989 and 2001 and opinion surveys as well as publications of researchers in the field of linguistic diversity constitute the information basis of the research. Although the United Nations recommends conducting population censuses every 10 years, there were problems in Ukraine with organization of scheduled censuses. By Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 2008, a new census was set for 2011. In 2010 the census was postponed to 2012. Then the census was postponed further to 2013 and 2016. The reasons for the delays were unspecified, but mass media mentioned a lack of funds for conducting population census as well as authorities’ reluctance to cause social unrest before the planned elections. Finally, in December 2015 the census was scheduled for 2020 (Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 16.12.2015 [Rozporiadzhennia..., 2015]). Thus, the last reliable detailed data on the language structure of the Ukraine’s population is as of 2001. Still there are reservations as to the quality of identifying the notion mother tongue (*ridna mova*) (Arel 2002). More

recent data appears in some sociological studies, but they are less detailed than the population census results.

Although the population of Ukraine mainly speaks Ukrainian and Russian, its language composition is quite diverse. Information on the distribution of Ukraine's population by the native language, based on the results of the all-Ukrainian population census of 2001, is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the population of Ukraine by the native language, 2001

<i>Claimed as the native language</i>	<i>Percentage in overall population</i>
Ukrainian	67.53
Russian	29.59
Crimean Tatar	0.48
Moldavian	0.38
Hungarian	0.34
Romanian	0.30
Bulgarian	0.28
Belarusian	0.12
Armenian	0.11
Gagauz	0.05
Romani	0.05
Polish	0.04
German	0.01
Slovak	0.01
Jewish	0.01
Greek	0.01
another language	0.30
language was not specified	0.42
Total	100.00

Source: Dani perepysu nasekennia 2001.

Not all Ukrainians claimed the Ukrainian language was their native language. Some of those who identify themselves as Ukrainians speak Russian (Arel 2002). According to the previous all-Ukrainian population census (1989), there were 72.7% of Ukrainians, 22.1% of Russians, and according to the census of 2001 – 77.8% and 17.3% respectively. Thus the number of

Ukrainians increased over the time period between the censuses. This can be explained, in particular, by the fact that those who were born in Ukrainian-Russian families, in 2001 identified themselves as Ukrainians, which meant a change of their ethnic self-identification (Skliâr 2008). Understandably, it is much easier to recognize one's Ukrainian ethnic origin than to master the lost language as the native one.

Territorially, the Ukrainian language is spread unevenly. Fig. 1 illustrates the distribution of the population of Ukraine by the Ukrainian language as the native one, based on the results of the all-Ukrainian population census of 2001.

Fig. 1. Distribution of the population of Ukraine by the Ukrainian language as the native language; Source: based on the data Dani perepysu nasekennia 2001.



The survey conducted in 2013 by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology showed that Ukrainian was claimed to be a native language of 56.2% of respondents, Russian – of 39.6%, other languages – of 3%, no opinion was given by 1.2%. The study surveyed 2,760 respondents aged over 18 years old who lived in different regions of Ukraine. The statistical sampling error did not exceed 2.8% (KIIS 2013). These results show that the spread of the Ukrainian language between 2001 and 2013 did not increase.

The mass media must be oriented on the population language structure. Therefore, the spread of languages in daily use can be judged by the list of newspapers published in Ukraine. The distribution of newspapers according to the languages in which they were published in 2015 is given in Table 2. Analysing it, one can conclude that the share of Russian-language titles in 2015 (30% of the total plus 10% of bilingual Russian-Ukrainian titles) reflects the number of the population who declared Russian as their native language in the census in 2001.

Table 2. Distribution of newspapers according to the languages of their publication in 2015

Types of newspapers	Number of publications										
	Total	including in the language									
		Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian and Russian	Hungarian	Polish	Romanian	English	German	Bilingual	Multilingual
National	271	149	99	15	–	–	–	2	3	–	3
Regional	265	171	57	35	–	1	–	–	–	1	–
City	292	156	103	32	–	–	–	1	–	–	–
District	390	342	14	28	1	–	3	–	–	2	–
Press of institutions	105	62	27	16	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Private	267	85	147	30	3	1	–	–	–	1	–
Promotional	162	75	64	23	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Other	94	29	46	14	1	1	–	–	–	1	2
Total	1846	1069	557	193	5	3	3	3	3	5	5

Source: *Zasoby masovoi informatsii ta knyhovydannia v Ukraini u 2015 rotsi, 2016, p. 10.*

Although Ukrainian-language publications prevail in the number of publications, the same cannot be said about the issue size. Russian-language periodical print publications prevail over the Ukrainian-language ones in view of their circulation (Table 3). It follows from its analysis that in 2014 the circulation of books and brochures in Russian amounted to 40% of all print in Ukraine. In the case periodical and continued publications (except newspapers) this was as much as 86%, and in the case of newspapers 66%.

Table 3. Non-periodical, periodical and continued publications in Ukraine in the Ukrainian and Russian languages in 2014–2015

Types of publications	2014		2015 (as of 30.10)	
	Number of publications, printed items	Circulation, thousands of copies	Number of publications, printed items	Circulation, thousands of copies
Books and brochures:	22 044	55 312.0	13 543	21 337.2
in Ukrainian	14 145	30 404.7	9 268	11 696.5
in Russian	5 629	22 049.1	2 996	8 868.8
Periodical and continued publications (except newspapers):	3 165	513 289.1	2 163	126 247.6
in Ukrainian	1 229	50 936.2	845	24 455.7
in Russian	581	439 270.7	335	92 959.3
Newspapers:	2 169	2 720 794.9	1 638	1 321 512.9
in Ukrainian	1 141	801 830.4	980	460 376.6
in Russian	792	1 796 038.9	466	808 157.2

Source: State Committee for Television and Radio-Broadcasting of Ukraine, 2015.

The data given in Table 2 and Table 3 show that among all print publications most copies are printed in Russian. The same is true for other mass media. V. Kulyk (2006) thus explains the existing situation by the fact that the authorities failed to support Ukrainian-language newspapers or programmes, e.g. in the form of tax leverages, in competition with Russian-language ones, in the same vein as they did with national products vs. those imported from Russia. Analysis of the Internet also showed the predominance of Russian-language information websites. Since the Russian language is understandable by the absolute majority of Ukrainians, the biggest e-retailers do not translate their websites into Ukrainian and, furthermore, legislation does not require them to. The Ukrainian language dominates in Ukrainian online space only in the sphere of education and public administration (Texty 2016). Generally, Russian dominates in the majority of Ukrainian mass media.

Researchers draw attention to the complex intertwining of political, religious and language opinions of the Ukrainian population (see Gentile 2015). S.

Melnyk and S. Chernychko (2010) generalized the research results concerning the ethno-linguistic composition of the population of Ukraine: (1) Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians (40–45% of the population); (2) Russian-speaking Ukrainians (30–34% of the population); (3) Russian-speaking Russians (20–21%); speaking other languages (3%). In some regions quite significant part of the population identified themselves as neither Ukrainians nor Russians: in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (17.4% by nationality, and 12.9% by language), in the Chernivtsi Region (20.9% and 19.6%), the Zakarpattia Region (17.0% and 16.1%), and the Odessa Region (16.5% and 11.8%). A significant spread of the Russian language is caused by the stereotype that has been applicable since the Soviet Union (Bernsand 2014). “Among large parts of the urban population of Ukraine, the Russian language enjoys higher prestige than the Ukrainian one, with many Russians being openly contemptuous of Ukrainian as a ‘vulgar peasant dialect’” (Farmer 1978, 126). The percentage of Ukrainians who claimed Ukrainian to be their native language gradually decreased in the Soviet Union period. These circumstances resulted in a situation where part of the population uses a mixture of both languages called “surzhyk”. Five major categories of surzhyk are defined: (1) urbanized peasant surzhyk, (2) village dialect surzhyk, (3) Sovietized-Ukrainian surzhyk, (4) urban bilinguals’ surzhyk, and (5) post-independence surzhyk (Bilaniuk 2004). It is more often used by ethnic Ukrainians (14%) than by ethnic Russians (5%). Furthermore, surveys show significant regional differences in the use of surzhyk: from 2.5% in the Western and 9.6% in the Eastern region to as much as 21.6% in the East-Central region (Khmelko 2004). Generally, the population of Ukraine mainly speak Ukrainian and Russian.

Bilingualism risks and language bipolarity in Ukraine

The ethnocultural diversity is inherent to many countries in the modern world. The events of the 20th century were the influential historical background for its formation in Ukraine (Dnistrianskij 2008). In particular, in the Soviet Union period demographic and migration processes took place that had a significant impact on the ethnic structure of Ukraine’s population. Those factors included Holodomor of 1932–1933 (a man-made famine that killed an estimated 4–10 million people mainly in the village territories of the central and north-eastern regions of the country), relocation of village families from Belarus and Russia to Ukraine, World War II (an estimated 5–7 million people were killed), the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 (approximately 200 thousand people), the so-called “exchange of population” between Ukraine and Poland during 1944–1951 (approximately 1.2 million

people were relocated in different directions (Myshchak 2010, 9), deployment of substantial military forces there, resettlement of mainly young people from Ukraine to Kazakhstan and other regions of the Soviet Union to develop virgin lands and construct industrial enterprises (over 650 thousand people left Ukraine during 1953–1969) (Romantsov 2004, 73–74). Dynamic changes of interstate borders took place in the first half of the 20th century in the territory of the modern Zakarpattia Region.

For Ukraine the ethnocultural diversity is evidenced first of all in the dominance of one ethnic minority, i.e. the Russian one, over others. It is expedient, therefore, to talk about bilingualism in Ukraine. At least 70% of population speak fluently both Ukrainian and Russian (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine 2008). Bilingualism in Ukraine is manifested not only in the dominance of the two languages in comparison to others, but also in their uneven territorial spread. Researchers point out the language bipolarity problem in Ukraine (Matsneva 2014). This situation influences further development of the country, in particular, in the direction of European integration.

While bilingualism is not a negative phenomenon in stable societies, the situation is quite different in Ukraine. On the one hand, after gaining independence in 1991, patriotic forces considered the revival and spread of the Ukrainian language to be an uncompromising task. On the other hand, the political forces in the regions where the Russian language prevails incite the population to resist the assimilation of languages under the slogan of the Russian language protection. These circumstances result in bipolarity in Ukraine (Arel 1995, Bocale 2016, Katchanovski 2016).

Some politicians suggest including the language bipolarity of Ukraine in law. They support the idea of cultural federalization, which is based on simultaneous existence and development of both the Ukrainian and Russian languages. To this end, they suggest incorporating into legislation a provision to the effect that the regions of Ukraine are to decide independently on which language is of higher priority for them to give it the official status (Bill 4008, 2014). The terms “the state language” (ukr. *depžavna mova*) and “the official language” (ukr. *oficijna mova*) are identical in Ukraine, which follows from the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (Rishennia... 1999) and both are equally often used in the official discourse. In countries with a federal structure (for example, Switzerland) the status of the official language is determined both at the national and regional levels. In Slovenia, although it is not a federation, Italian and Hungarian are established as official languages in some municipalities (Novak-Lukanovič & Limon 2012). In our opinion, such

an approach is unacceptable for Ukraine, because it will incite estrangement and strengthen separatist public sentiments in the regions where the Russian language prevails. This constitutes a threat to the integrity of the state, which has already been suffering from conflicts supported by the Russian Federation in eastern Ukraine.

The approach, according to which population differentiation by language is not considered a serious problem, is worth mentioning. It is called the “ethno-socio-cultural integration” (Matsneva 2014, 19). Showing tolerance to each other, people speak languages of each other. The population which is in the “aura” of a certain ethno-national community gradually acquires its features. This occurs most rapidly at an early age. Therefore, the school education system is critical here. The number of students at schools according to the languages of study is given in Table 4. Upon graduation, students take the so-called “external independent testing”. The tests for this education quality evaluation are prepared in the state language. At individual request, tests can be translated into a regional language or a minority language, except for the test in the subject “Ukrainian Language and Literature” (Law 5029 2012). The regional language is understood here as a language used in a certain area of the state by its citizens who form a group that is smaller in number than the rest of the state population.

Data given in Table 4 shows that the distribution of youth studying in the Ukrainian mostly corresponds to the distribution of population by the Ukrainian language as the native one, as indicated in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Peculiarities of the spread of Turkic languages in Ukraine

Speakers of Turkic languages live in the South of the Donetsk Region (Urums – Turkic-speaking Greeks), in the Kherson Region (Crimean Tatars in the Henichesk District, Meskhetian Turks – mainly in the Chaplynka District), in Odessa, Mykolaiv, Donetsk and other southern regions (Gagauz – mainly in the southern part of the Odessa Region) (Demchenko 2014). The majority of Turkic-speaking population live in the territory of the Crimean Peninsula.

In the early 1990s Crimean Tatars (historical name – Kirimli) returned to the territory of Ukraine, mainly to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Their number there in 2001 was over 240,000 people (12% of the population). At the beginning of the 2013–2014 academic year 5,551 students studied in the Crimean Tatar language in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Zahalnoosvitni navchalnii zakłady... 2014, 61). More recent information was not published by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine due to the annexation of this territory by the Russian Federation in 2014. Starting

Table 4. Distribution of students of general education institutions by the languages of study as of at the beginning of 2016/17 academic year

Regions of Ukraine	languages of study*									
	Ukrainian	Russian	Romanian	Hungarian	Polish	English	Slovak	Bulgarian	Moldavian	
Vinnitsia	152 485	536	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Volyn	128 581	181	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dnipropetrovsk	247 229	58 912	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donetsk	89 243	60 709	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zhytomyr	127 732	602	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zakarpattia	137 122	1 441	2 686	16 020	-	-	145	-	-	-
Zaporizhia	116 879	38 130	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ivano-Frankivsk	146 537	439	-	-	449	-	-	-	-	-
Kyiv	189 388	1 018	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kirovohrad	88 399	1 341	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luhansk	33 653	18 032	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lviv	257 394	2 597	-	-	910	-	-	-	-	-
Mykolaiv	99 905	8 297	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Odessa	168 655	71 754	-	-	-	-	-	61	-	2 693
Poltava	124 836	1 604	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rivne	148 047	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sumy	88 227	3 426	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ternopil	104 975	117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kharkiv	166 854	62 051	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kherson	87 774	15 776	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Khmelnytskyi	126 930	125	-	-	426	-	-	-	-	-
Cherkasy	108 568	863	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chernivtsi	83 705	299	13 453	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chernivtsi	91 014	340	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kyiv City	262 653	7 365	-	-	-	379	-	-	-	-
Ukraine	3 376 785	355 955	16 139	16 020	1 785	379	145	61	-	2 693

* The information is given exclusive of the temporary occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

Source: Zahalnoosvitni navchalnii zaklady..., 2017, p. 61.

from 2014, the so-called “government of Crimea” has been pursuing an all-encompassing program of linguistic assimilation, which ultimately sends a message that minority languages are unimportant and unnecessary (Bocale 2016). The conditions for the development of minority languages in Crimea have worsened since then.

The Kirimli language and four more Turkic languages, which Gagauz, Crimean Karaites, Krymchaks and Urums speak, were listed as endangered languages by the UNESCO (Dryga & Syrinska 2015). In order to improve conditions for their development, their status should be monitored, which is, however, hard to do in the context of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. Over the years of their living in Ukraine, the Kirimli have developed their mass media: radio, television, print publications, etc. (Žídková & Melichar 2015). Ukraine can improve the situation of Turkic languages by improving its legislation. One of the positive steps will be a legal regulation on the status of indigenous people in Ukraine (Merzhvynskyy 2017), which would ensure that the quota for the use of the languages of these peoples will not be cut in mass media.

Conclusions

The attitude towards the languages at the level of state policy changes together with power shifts. The influence of the Soviet policy of the Russian language dominance is still present in Ukraine. After gaining independence by Ukraine, the Ukrainian language gained an opportunity to become a fully-fledged state language. However, territorially, it is spread unevenly, which is reflected in pronounced bilingualism and language bipolarity. These circumstances were among the main endogenic factors of the outbreak of an armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation. In order to prevent similar negative processes in other regions of Ukraine, it is necessary to take measures, which would combine both creating conditions for the strengthening of the Ukrainian language as the state one and promoting the development of minority languages (due to the lack of financial resources, this remains mainly in the declarative sphere). There are preconditions for the whole population of Ukraine to speak the state Ukrainian language fluently, irrespective of one’s nationality. Simultaneously, the development of other languages must not be stifled. The engagement of Ukrainian entities in the ELEN (European Language Equality Network) would be a significant step. The processes of “ethno-socio-cultural integration” of the Russian-speaking population in different regions of Ukraine deserve great attention and further development.

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